VISIT…

WAR OF DRAGONS

A Short Adventure for Four 18th-Level Player Characters

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War of Dragons is a short D&D adventure for four 18th-level player characters (PCs). The story is set in and around a town called Silversands that serves the needs of a powerful gold dragon. You can place the action on the coast of either a small inland sea or a large river. The area you select should feature a marshy area and a mountain range as well. As always, feel free to adapt the material presented here as you see fit to make it work with your campaign.

PREPARATION

You (the DM) need the D&D core rulebooks, including the *Player's Handbook*, the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, and the *Monster Manual*. This adventure utilizes the v.3.5 rules, but it can easily be used with the 3.0 rules as well.

To get started, print out this adventure (including the maps). The maps all come from the Map-a-Week web column at www.wizards.com/dnd. The Frontier Landscape set provides maps of the town and the surrounding area. Only maps 2—4 and the bonus map 3 are required for the adventure, though you can use all five. The maps have been included with this adventure, but you may want the two-page composite of the Frontier Landscape rather than the one-page composite included with this adventure. The dragon lair map is the Flooded Sanctum map.

Read through the scenario at least once to familiarize yourself with the situation, threats, and major NPCs (particularly their motivations). In addition, you might want to peruse *Draconomicon: The Book of Dragons* (if you have it) for additional dragon tactics.

Text that appears in shaded boxes is player information that you can read aloud or paraphrase for the players at the proper times. Any unshaded boxes contain important information for you.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Some hundreds of years ago, a group of grateful humans pledged themselves to the service of the gold dragon Miraxacalas in return for her aid in saving their city from an extraplanar threat. Though she graciously declined their offer, they would not be deterred and moved their whole community to a spot closer to her home. There they established the town of Silversands along the banks of a wide river near the mountains where Miraxacalas laired. Named for the silvery color of the sandy riverbank, Silversands grew and prospered. The people provided the dragon with whatever

she requested, and she protected the town from the predations of large creatures and bands of giants.

Though Miraxacalas is quite powerful, she has gotten a bit lax in her defenses of late. No real dangers have plagued her servants for decades, so she spends most of her time sunning herself near her lair, hunting the cattle that her people have raised for her, or sleeping. She also likes visiting people in human form, and she communicates regularly with a small circle of sages and knowledge-seeking wizards in Silversands.

As the beneficent ruler of Silversands, Miraxacalas graciously accepts the service of her people, but she leaves them to their own devices as far as how they perform that service. She is grateful to them for what they do, and she never makes excessive demands. The gold dragon s hoard has swelled with the gifts that the townspeople have rendered up every year, but she considers the town itself, with its population of loyal friends, to be the most valuable treasure of all.

But such a prize could not remain uncontested for long. An ambitious black dragon named Vrinthralix Venrakkanax wants to expand his hoard by wresting treasure from other dragons, and he possesses the perfect weapon for doing so.

Vrinthralix has always had a strong interest in diseases, and he has spent many centuries researching them, to the extreme detriment of many nearby humanoids and other creatures. Eventually, he discovered a disease nearly unknown in the rest of the world one that affects only dragons. The high fever resulting from this disease, known as wyrm fever, causes the infected dragon to hallucinate and behave as if insane until death finally comes. With visions of establishing an empire of his own, Vrinthralix carefully bottled samples of the disease-causing agent from his home swamp and set off to increase his fortune. He hoped to usurp other dragons hoards without fighting to the death by engaging in brief skirmishes, then waiting for his opponents to die from the fisease delivered by his claw attacks.

When Vrinthralix discovered the town of Silversands serving a gold dragon, he decided the setup was perfect for his needs. Not only would such a dragon have a hoard worth appropriating, but a ready supply of townsfolk already accustomed to meeting the needs of a dragon would be an added bonus.

The black dragon established a temporary lair in the marshes to the east of the town and made an agreement with the local stone giants for aid. Then, coating his claws with the infectious material he had brought, he mounted a surprise attack on Miraxacalas from his new base. Meanwhile, a band of stone giants entered the gold dragon s lair and raided her hoard while she fought the black dragon in the skies. The giants made off with the items of magical healing that she kept in her lair for emergencies, then hid to await her return. Gravely wounded, the gold dragon retreated to her lair in the mountains to heal herself, only to discover that the healing ointments and scrolls that she usually kept there were missing and, worse still, intruders had invaded her lair. The giants staged hit-and-run attacks on the wounded gold dragon, denying her rest and dealing her enough damage to negate any natural healing. Their orders are to stay there and keep her pinned down in her lair until she finally succumbs to death from wyrm fever.

Meanwhile, Vrinthralix claimed the town of Silversands and its people for his own. When they resisted, he destroyed ships in the harbor, then homes by the dozen. Still the people refused his overlordship. So the black dragon simply began eating residents until the townsfolk finally submitted to his will.

Vrinthralix demanded all items of magic that that the residents possessed, both to increase his treasure hoard and to keep the townsfolk from using such items against him. Now the people unwillingly serve Vrinthralix, fearing the consequences if they disobey. They don t have the skills or magic to best the old black wyrm, and Miraxacalas hasn t been seen in weeks. Her followers fear that she is dead and they are doomed.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

The PCs goal in this adventure is to resolve the situation in any way they can. First, they must find the gold dragon s lair, defeat the band of stone giants harassing her, and figure out what has happened to her. At that point, they can decide whether to get rid of both dragons, side with Miraxacalas, or make a deal with Vrinthralix. If they choose to help the gold dragon, they must recognize that she is ill and heal her before they can gain her aid. Whatever their decision, the PCs must eventually find the black dragon s lair and either put a proposition to him or defeat him.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

As the DM, it is your job to decide how best to involve the characters in the adventure. You can use the following hooks to spur your imagination, modifying them as necessary to fit your campaign or the characters.

- Rumors abound of a black dragon terrorizing a town. Besides helping their fellow humans, the PCs can add choice items from a dragon s hoard to their wealth by removing the threat.
- Miraxacalas s hoard contains a piece of an artifact that the PCs need. They come seeking the friendly gold dragon but instead find a black dragon terrorizing the town.
- The PCs are nobles in the Silversands area. When trouble breaks out, the local ruler sends them to investigate the black dragon situation and resolve it for the good of the crown.
- Silversands is home to one of the PCs. When Vrinthralix arrives, frantic relatives put out a call for help from their powerful kin.

BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

War of Dragons is a site-based adventure with two detailed encounter areas and a town that has been left for you to develop yourself. Except for the placed encounters within those locations, the encounters may be used in any order and placed as desired.

The adventure begins when the PCs get to the town of Silversands. The black dragon is not in evidence when they arrive.

A. THE TOWN OF SILVERSANDS

Refer to the maps of the frontier town area for Silversands. Thanks to its riverside location and its proximity to several land and sea trade routes, Silversands is a thriving trade center for the area. Because of its vigorous commercial activity, the town has more buildings and larger ones than would be typical for a town of its size. On a normal day, Silversands has many visitors, so it usually seems more populous than it really is. Silversands is not fully detailed here, so feel free to develop the town as appropriate for your campaign.

♛ **Silversands (large town):** Conventional and monstrous; AL LG; 4,000 gp limit; Assets 840,000 gp; Population 4,200; Mixed (human 79%, halfling 5%, elf 5%, dwarf 5%, half-elf 5%, half-orc 1%).

Authority Figures: Miraxacalas, female mature adult gold dragon, Lord Mayor Kiv Svolson, male human fighter 8.

Important Characters: Rivilas Fendenspoon, female halfling cleric 7 (Yondalla); Yirdpol Yis, male human expert 6 (merchant); Drithina Tirine, female human fighter 7 (captain of the militia); Tinis Ango, male elf ranger 6 (militia second-in-command); Ren, Oesti, and Fiall, male and female human warrior 3 (scouts); Gihvih Morass, male human aristocrat 5 (deputy mayor); Kotor Night, male human cleric 6 (Pelor); Tetinkim Kilald, male elf wizard 11 (sage); Cazurn Litight, female human wizard 8 (sage); Nollem Deltorine, male human wizard 9 (sage); Biseress, female human bard 5 (entertainer/prostitute); Tiphan Waleine, male human commoner 3 (logger/bar regular).

REGULAR ACTIVITIES

The residents of Silversands subsist on logging, some agriculture, fishing, and trade with other coastal towns. Local artisans produce exotic woodcrafts that are sold around the world.

The map shows the main town center, plus a secondary grouping of buildings across from the harbor. This rambling complex consists of a monastery and a set of warehouses owned by the church. The monks operate the warehouse to generate income for the monastery.

Fishing boats use the docks daily, and other towns along the coast send their trading vessels here. As many as eight ships may be docked here at any time. The dockside part of the town is rougher than the rest, but not by much.

The militia and the Lord Mayor uphold the law in Silversands. These officials consider the written laws to be guidelines for dispensing justice, not cut-and-dried rules. In a truly practical spirit, the officials work toward safety and general harmony for the people and use the laws as means to those ends.

WYRM FEVER

A disease originating in dank swamps, this malady affects only dragons. It is delivered by injury, and the DC for the Fortitude save to resist it is 30. After an incubation period of 1d4 days, it deals 1d8 Str, 1d8 Int, and 1d8 Con every day that the save is failed. The wounds by which the dragon acquired the disease become infected and ooze a sickly green pus. The high fever resulting from the malady causes the affected dragon to hallucinate, seeing enemies everywhere, mistaking friends for foes, and the like.

Silversands also has a sages guild, or club, where learned people come to discuss esoteric matters. Miraxacalas started this organization because she wanted to broaden her horizons by talking with others. The group has not met in two weeks, but it can convene at any time it is convenient.

THE PRESENT SITUATION

At present, Silversands has the feel of a town under siege. The black dragon Vrinthralix often attacks without warning, so everyone is a bit jumpy. There is not much activity on the streets right now because everyone wants to be able to get under cover quickly and not worry about losing possessions.

The local militia is on constant patrol within the town. Additional patrols range as far as the mountains where Miraxacalas lives, and they relay information on the current state of affairs to their captain. The PCs can easily track down the captain and get the latest report.

The people of Silversands do not know anything about fighting dragons they re used to a benevolent dragon, not a terrible one. They can be of only minimal help to the PCs in actual combat situations.

A1. CHARACTER INQUIRIES

Since the PCs are 18th level, they re both powerful enough and famous enough to get all the information they want from the townsfolk just by asking. If an NPC that the PCs choose to question doesn t have the information they need, he readily directs them to someone who does have it.

Everyone in town knows the general state of affairs, and the PCs can learn the following information by questioning anyone they meet.

- A big black dragon appeared one day and drove off Miraxacalas, the gold dragon that until then had protected the town.
- The black dragon has been plaguing the town ever since (for two weeks, to be exact, though most people don t remember exactly how long).
- The black dragon, who calls himself Vrinthralix, has already attacked the town several times and destroyed one building. Several other structures also bear the marks of his wrath (and his breath weapon). The logging mill has been damaged, and several of the surrounding farms have also fallen prey to his depredations. Since he knows he is the master here now, he just takes what he wants whenever he wants it.
- Miraxacalas has not been seen since Vrinthralix arrived. She is feared dead, but perhaps she is lying gravely wounded or incapacitated somewhere. Nobody who has attempted to visit her lair has returned to the town thus far, so it s likely that the black dragon is keeping watch over the area and devouring any who try to win through to her lair.
- Miraxacalas is a magnificent creature, at least 30 feet long from nose to tail tip. The horrid Vrinthralix is at least twice that size.

The guard captain and officials in town can tell the PCs everything the townsfolk know, as well as the following tidbits.

- Vrinthralix lives somewhere in the nearby marshes. Two patrols sent out to look for his lair never returned, so the townspeople stopped looking.
- No less than four groups of townsfolk have attempted to visit Miraxacalas s lair, and all four have disappeared.
- Divinations indicate that Miraxacalas is alive but somehow trapped or confined in her lair.

The sages guild can reveal the following information.

- Miraxacalas is a brilliant creature with a depth of insight no human has ever achieved.
- She knows a great deal of magic, but she isn t much given to combat. Her spells tend toward gathering information rather than either fighting or healing.
- The gold dragon is middle aged, but far older than the town itself. She won t say how long she has been alive.
- Miraxacalas has healing magic in her treasure hoard, as well as numerous unique nonmagical items that the townsfolk have fashioned for her.
- The gold dragon is the kindest-hearted creature the sages have ever met. She has a sparkling sense of humor and wouldn t hurt a fly if she could help it except to save her people.

The sages can also provide the PCs with a great deal of information about dragons in general, though none of them has ever actually fought one.

The PCs can easily get directions to Miraxacalas s lair, since nearly everyone in town knows where it is. The marshes that hide Vrinthralix s lair are equally easy to find, though his lair is not. Still, the locals know of several places where a dragon as big as Vrinthralix might feel at home.

B. THE MOUNTAINS

While traversing the mountains, the characters may encounter either monsters or humanoids.

B1. RANDOM MONSTER ENCOUNTERS

The mountains near Silversands are home to numerous monstrous creatures. Miraxacalas usually kept them in line and away from the town, but now that she lies languishing in her lair, the monsters are showing more boldness. If you wish, the PCs can encounter any or all of the following groups on their way to the gold dragon s lair.

- Three fire giant rangers (see below). If desired, you can give them each a couple of dire wolves as animal companions without affecting the EL of the encounter.

Fire Giant Rangers (3): Male fire giant ranger 5; CR 15; Large giant (fire); HD 15d8+75 plus 5d8+25; hp 190; Init —1; Spd 40 ft.; AC 22, touch 9, flat-footed 22; Base Atk +16; Grp +31; Atk +26 melee (1d4+16, slam) or +27 melee (2d6+13/19—20, +2 *longsword*) or +15 ranged (1d6+11, rock); Full Atk +26 melee (1d4+16, slam) or +27/+22/+17/+12 melee (2d6+13/19—20, +2 *longsword*) and +24 melee (1d8+5/19—20, short sword) or +15 ranged (1d6+11, rock); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA rock throwing; SQ combat style (two-weapon fighting), favored enemies (humans +4, elves +2), low-light vision, rock catching, vulnerability to cold, wild empathy +5; AL LE; SV Fort +18, Ref +8, Will +10; Str 33, Dex 9, Con 21, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 11.

Skills and Feats: Climb +17, Craft (weaponsmithing) +6, Hide +5, Intimidate +6, Jump +21, Knowledge (nature) +7, Move Silently +9, Spot +14, Survival +7; Cleave, Endurance, Great Cleave, Improved Overrun, Improved Sunder, Iron Will, Power Attack, Track, [Two-Weapon Fighting], Weapon Focus (longsword).

Rock Throwing (Ex): The fire giant ranger receives a +1 racial bonus on attack rolls when throwing rocks (already included in the statistics above). He can hurl rocks weighing 40 to 50 pounds each (Small objects) up to five range increments (120 feet per range increment).

Favored Enemy: The fire giant ranger has chosen humans and elves as his favored enemies. He gains a +4 or +2 bonus, respectively, on his Bluff, Listen, Sense Motive, Spot, and Survival checks when using these skills against these kinds of creature. He gets the same bonus on weapon damage rolls against them.

Rock Catching (Ex): The fire giant ranger can catch Small, Medium, or Large rocks or projectiles of similar shape. Once per round, if he would normally be hit by a rock, he can make a Reflex save at a +4 bonus to catch it as a free action. The DC is 15 for a Small rock, 20 for a Medium one, and 25 for a Large one. (If the projectile provides a magical bonus on attack rolls, the DC increases by that amount.) The fire giant ranger must be ready for and aware of the attack in order to make a rock catching attempt.

Wild Empathy (Ex): The fire giant ranger can use body language, vocalizations, and demeanor to improve the attitude of an animal (such as a bear or a monitor lizard). This ability functions just like a Diplomacy check to improve the attitude of a person. His bonus on the check is +5. The typical domestic animal has a starting attitude of indifferent, while wild animals are usually unfriendly. The ranger and the animal must study each other for 1 minute. This ability can also be used to influence a magical beast with an Intelligence score of 1 or 2, but the ranger takes a —4 penalty on the check.

Ranger Spells Prepared: (1; save DC 12 + spell level): 1st *pass without trace.*

Possessions: +2 studded leather armor, +2 longsword, ring of protection +1, potion of barkskin +5, 6 rocks.

- A pack of six hill giant dire wereboars (see the *Monster Manual*).
- A group of six to eight harpy archers (as described in the *Monster Manual*) from the nearby marshes who have come here to hunt. (If you don t want to use that many harpies, cut the number in half and give each harpy two more fighter levels.)

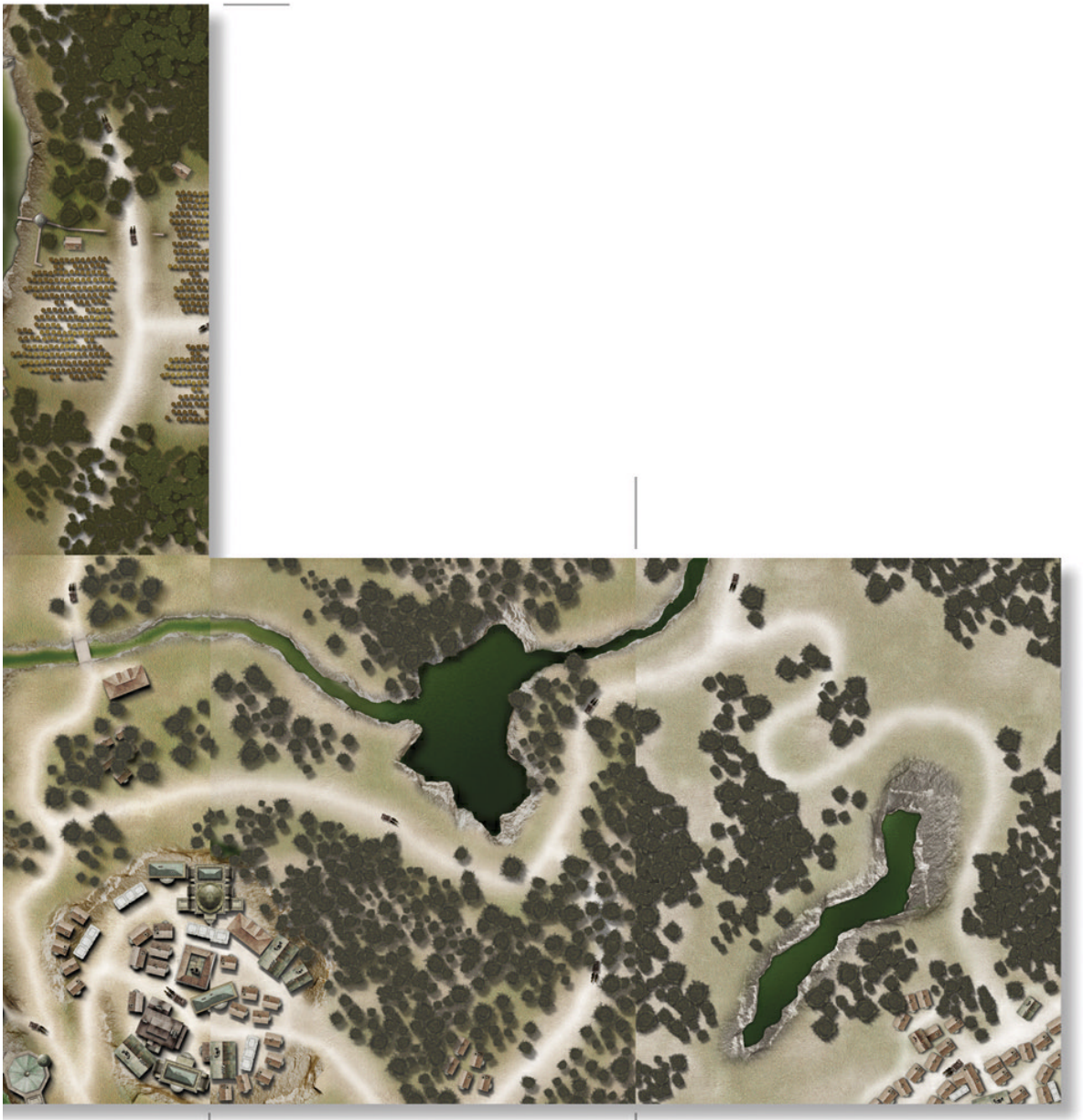
B2. RANDOM CHARACTER ENCOUNTERS

Character encounters should be with solitary rangers, migrating humanoids, or patrols from the town. These characters are not interested in fighting the PCs, but they can serve as sources of information. The PCs can glean the following from anyone they meet.

- The giants and other monsters that the gold dragon always kept at bay have been acting up lately. Those that had retreated beyond the mountains are now beginning to return.
- Most of the giants in this area are stone giants who keep dire wolves and other monsters as pets. Some ogres have also been seen, as well as a few hill giants and fire giants, though the fire giants are not native to this area.
- A lot of giants have been hanging around near the dragon s lair of late. They could be thinking of taking her hoard for themselves.

SILVER

SANDS



Cartographer: Todd Gamble

- No one has seen Miraxacalas in a few weeks. She may very well be dead.

All the humanoids the characters meet here know the general direction to Miraxacalas s lair and can point it out to the PCs. They have not been there, however, so they don t know any precise landmarks or terrain.

B3. GIANTS IN THE WAY (EL 18)

Vrinthralix has hired a group consisting of five stone giants and an ogre mage, all with class levels, to keep Miraxacalas confined to her lair and prevent aid from reaching her. Thus far, their frequent attacks have kept her injured and cowering while the wyrm fever does its work. The giants have also managed to prevent anyone from reaching her lair to render aid; in fact, they are the ones who intercepted and defeated the delegations sent from Silversands.

When the PCs arrive, the giants are lurking just outside the gold dragon s lair, staying out of sight and watching for anyone approaching. The stone giants use their Hide skills and do their best to stay motionless while on watch. The fighters and the cleric stick close to the lair entrance, while the rogue watches from farther out. The ogre mage uses her flight and invisibility powers to sweep a wide arc around the lair. She also uses her *medallion of thoughts* to detect any unseen but sentient creatures nearby.

Stone Giant Fighters (3): Male and female stone giant fighter 5; CR 13; Large giant (earth); HD 14d8+84 plus 5d10+30; hp 204; Init +8; Spd 30 ft.; AC 30, touch 14, flat-footed 26; Base Atk +15; Grp +29; Atk +24 melee (1d4+15, slam) or +26 melee (2d8+19, +2 *greatclub*) or +19 ranged (2d8+10, rock); Full Atk +24 melee (1d4+15, slam) or +26/+21/+16 melee (2d8+19, +2 *greatclub*) or +19 ranged (2d8+10, rock); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA rock throwing; SQ darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, rock catching; AL NE; SV Fort +19, Ref +9, Will +9; Str 31, Dex 18, Con 22, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 8. Height 12 ft., weight 1,500 lbs.

Skills and Feats: Climb +16, Hide +9, Jump +16, Listen +3, Spot +15; Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Great Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Point Blank Shot, Power Attack, Precise Shot, Weapon Specialization (greatclub).

Rock Throwing (Ex): The stone giant fighter receives a +1 racial bonus on attack rolls when throwing rocks. He can hurl rocks weighing 40 to 50 pounds each (Small objects) up to five range increments (180 feet per range increment).

Rock Catching (Ex): A stone giant fighter can catch Small, Medium, or Large rocks or projectiles of similar shape. Once per round, if he would normally be hit by a rock, he can make a Reflex save at a +4 bonus to catch it as a free action. The DC is 15 for a Small rock, 20 for a Medium one, and 25 for a Large one. (If the projectile provides a magical bonus on attack rolls, the DC increases by that amount.) The giant must be ready for and aware of the attack in order to make a rock catching attempt.

Possessions: +2 hide armor, ring of protection +1, +2 greatclub, potion of barkskin +5, dust of appearance, 6 rocks.

Glunnock: Male stone giant cleric 5; CR 13; Large giant (earth); HD 14d8+84 plus 5d8+30; hp 199; Init +7; Spd 30 ft.; AC 29, touch 13, flat-footed 26; Base Atk +13; Grp +26; Atk +21 melee (1d4+13, slam) or +23 melee (2d8+15, +2 *greatclub*) or +16 ranged (2d8+9, rock); Full Atk +21 melee (1d4+13, slam) or +23/+18/+13 melee (2d8+15, +2 *greatclub*) or +16 ranged (2d8+9, rock); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA rebuke undead 2/day, rock throwing; SQ darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, rock catching; AL NE; SV Fort +19, Ref +8, Will +14; Str 29, Dex 16, Con 22, Int 10, Wis 18, Cha 8. Height 12 ft., weight 1,500 lbs.

Skills and Feats: Climb +10, Concentration +11, Heal +9, Hide +5, Jump +13, Listen +7, Spot +15; Combat Reflexes, Far Shot, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Point Blank Shot, Power Attack, Precise Shot.

Rock Throwing (Ex): Glunnock receives a +1 racial bonus on attack rolls when throwing rocks. He can hurl rocks weighing 40 to 50 pounds each (Small objects) up to five range increments (180 feet per range increment, or 360 feet using Far Shot).

Rock Catching (Ex): Glunnock can catch Small, Medium, or Large rocks or projectiles of similar shape. Once per round, if he would normally be hit by a rock, he can make a Reflex save at a +4 bonus to catch it as a free action. The DC is 15 for a Small rock, 20 for a Medium one, and 25 for a Large one. (If the projectile provides a magical bonus on attack rolls, the DC increases by that amount.) Glunnock must be ready for and aware of the attack in order to make a rock catching attempt.

Cleric Spells Prepared (5/5/4/3; save DC 14 + spell level): 0 *cure minor wounds* (4), *detect magic*; 1 s t *cure light wounds* (3), *protection from good**, *shield of faith*; 2 n d *bull's strength**, *cure moderate wounds* (2), *spiritual weapon*; 3 r d *cure serious wounds, dispel magic, magic vestment**.

*Domain spell. Deity: None. Domains: Evil (cast evil spells at +1 caster level), Strength (feat of strength 1/day).

Possessions: +2 *hide armor, ring of protection* +1, +2 *greatclub, wand of cure light wounds* (caster level 2nd, 50 charges), *dust of appearance,* 6 rocks.

Floggin: Female stone giant rogue 5; CR 13; Large giant (earth); HD 14d8+70 plus 5d6+25; hp 175; Init +5; Spd 30 ft.; AC 31, touch 16, flat-footed 31; Base Atk +13; Grp +26; Atk +21 melee (1d4+13, slam) or +21 melee (2d8+13, greatclub) or +18 ranged (2d8+9, rock); Full Atk +21 melee (1d4+13, slam) or +21/+16/+11 melee (2d8+13, greatclub) or +18 ranged (2d8+9, rock); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA rock throwing, sneak attack +3d6; SQ darkvision 60 ft., evasion, low-light vision, rock catching, trap sense +1, trapfinding, uncanny dodge; AL NE; SV Fort +15, Ref +13, Will +8; Str 28, Dex 21, Con 20, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 8. Height 11 ft. 6 in., weight 1,390 lbs.

Skills and Feats: Balance +7, Climb +31, Hide +25, Jump +28, Listen +6, Move Silently +17, Search +7, Spot +23, Tumble +22; Combat Reflexes, Far Shot, Iron Will, Point Blank Shot, Power Attack, Precise Shot, Stealthy.

Rock Throwing (Ex): Floggin receives a +1 racial bonus on attack rolls when throwing rocks. She can hurl rocks weighing 40 to 50 pounds each (Small objects) up to five range increments (180 feet per range increment, or 360 feet using Far Shot).

Evasion (Ex): If exposed to any effect that normally allows a character to attempt a Reflex saving throw for half damage, Floggin takes no damage with a successful saving throw.

Rock Catching (Ex): Floggin can catch Small, Medium, or Large rocks or projectiles of similar shape. Once per round, if she would normally be hit by a rock, she can make a Reflex save at a +4 bonus to catch it as a free action. The DC is 15 for a Small rock, 20 for a Medium one, and 25 for a Large one. (If the projectile provides a magical bonus on attack rolls, the DC increases by that amount.) Floggin must be ready for and aware of the attack in order to make a rock catching attempt.

Trap Sense (Ex): Floggin has a +1 bonus on Reflex saves to avoid traps and a +1 dodge bonus to AC against attacks by traps.

Trapfinding: Floggin can use the Search skill to find traps with Search DCs higher than 20.

Uncanny Dodge (Ex): Floggin can react to danger before her senses would normally allow her to even be aware of it. She retains her Dexterity bonus to AC regardless of being caught flat-footed or struck by an invisible attacker. (She still loses any Dexterity bonus to AC if immobilized.)

Possessions: +2 *leather armor,* greatclub, *ring of protection* +2, *ring of counterspells* (loaded with *charm monster*), 2 *Keoghtom's ointment* (taken from the gold dragon s lair), 3 rocks.

Kin-Lin: Female ogre mage sorcerer 5; CR 13; Large giant; HD 5d8+15 plus 5d4+15; hp 64; Init +5; Spd 40 ft., fly 40 ft. (good); AC 15, touch 10, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +5; Grp +15; Atk +10 melee (3d6+9/19—20, greatsword) or +5 ranged (2d6/[TS]3, longbow); Full Atk +10 melee (3d6+9/19—20, greatsword) or +5 ranged (2d6/[TS]3, longbow); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA spell-like abilities; SQ darkvision 90 ft., flight, low-light vision, regeneration 5, spell resistance 19; AL LE; SV Fort +8, Ref +5, Will +6; Str 22, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 18, Wis 12, Cha 22. Height 10 ft., weight 650 lbs.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +9, Concentration +16, Hide —3, Knowledge (arcana) +13, Listen +11, Move Silently +7, Spellcraft +19, Spot +11; Combat Casting, Combat Expertise, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will *darkness, invisibility*; 1/day *charm person* (DC 17), *cone of cold* (DC 21), *gaseous form, polymorph, sleep* (DC 17). Caster level 9th.

Flight (Su): Kin-Lin can cease or resume flight as a free action. While using *gaseous form,* she can fly at her natural speed and has perfect maneuverability.

Regeneration (Ex): Fire and acid deal normal damage to Kin-Lin. If she loses a limb or body part, she can reattach it by holding the severed member to the stump. Reattachment takes 1 minute. If the head or some other vital organ is severed, it must be reattached within 10 minutes or she dies. Kin-Lin cannot regrow lost body parts.

Sorcerer Spells Known (6/8/6; save DC 16 + spell level): 0 *acid orb, detect magic, mage hand, ray of frost, read magic, resistance;* 1st *mage armor, magic missile, shield, true strike;* 2nd *bear's endurance, bull's strength.*

Possessions: Greatsword, *medallion of thoughts, ring of minor spell storing* (*true strike, bear's endurance*), *lantern of revealing,* scroll of *heal* (taken from the gold dragon s lair).

Tactics: Given their position on the mountainside, the giants can easily see or hear anyone attempting to approach the lair by scaling the mountain. Even an invisible group creates a visible effect while moving through the vegetation, and Kin-Lin can pick up the presence of sentient creatures with her medallion. When the giants see foes approaching, they throw rocks at maximum range.

The giants spot any PCs who approach by air (but not invisibly) at a far enough distance to throw rocks for at least 1 round. A group approaching invisibly and by air can get fairly close, but the *medallion of thoughts*

reveals their presence as soon as they come within its range. Thereafter, the giants can use their *lantern of revealing* and *dust of appearance* to locate their foes. The giants have no way to detect ethereal creatures approaching the lair.

In combat, the ogre mage prefers to turn invisible and cast enhancement spells on the giants before attacking the PCs directly. She also makes sure that she has *mage armor* and *shield* in place before making any direct attacks.

Development: If any captured giants are interrogated, they readily reveal that they were hired by the black dragon to keep the gold dragon bottled up in her lair and prevent help from reaching her.

C. THE LAIR OF MIRAXACALAS

Near the highest peaks in the mountains is a large cave opening that serves as the main entrance to the gold dragon s lair. It is sheltered from the wind by a double row of trees that grow close by, though not so close that Miraxacalas disturbs them when entering or leaving. The cave opening is located beneath an overhang of rock, so it is shielded from view from most angles, though it is obvious to anyone approaching from below at a distance of 100 feet or less. A pile of brush and small trees a short distance down the mountainside gives mute evidence of the giants efforts to clear the area around the entrance so as to gain easier access to the lair.

Thus far, the giants have stolen only what they were instructed to take from the gold dragon s hoard namely, her items of healing. Vrinthralix has promised them their choice of items from the hoard in addition to their pay after Miraxacalas dies.

The giants have been repeatedly attacking Miraxacalas for several days in an effort to cow her and negate any natural healing that she might otherwise achieve. The dragon is sorely injured now and very much afraid. Though she has managed to slay a giant or two, she is wearing down as the disease takes its toll on her. Furthermore, her mind is losing its grip on reality as the wyrm fever progresses. She has become quite paranoid and currently sees any creature of humanoid shape as a giant ready to attack her, regardless of its size or true appearance. At present, she is hiding in area C3, the cavern she is currently using as her sleeping area.

LAYOUT

The lair of the gold dragon consists of four interconnected caverns, each slightly more than 50 feet in diameter. They are connected by 30-foot-wide tunnels that Miraxacalas made passable some years ago and has maintained well ever since.

C1. First Cave

At the back of the entrance cavern is a tunnel mouth approximately 30 feet in diameter. The tunnel leads down 40 feet to the first cave. Miraxacalas used to use this cave as a sleeping chamber, but she has not wanted to rest this close to the surface since the black dragon and his giants came.

Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs enter this cavern.

> This round, natural cavern is approximately 50 feet in diameter. Other than some dried plant matter scattered across the floor, it is empty. Besides the entry passage, two other tunnels lead out from this cavern.

Tired of the continual raids by the giants but unable to put a stop to them, Miraxacalas has recently made some magical alterations to this area. Though her preparations won t stop the giants, she hopes they will at least alert her to their arrival, so that she can prepare for battle. She has covered the outside entrance to this cavern with an *alarm* spell that sets off a mental-only warning. Thus, when anyone enters, she knows about it and can begin her preparations (see area C3).

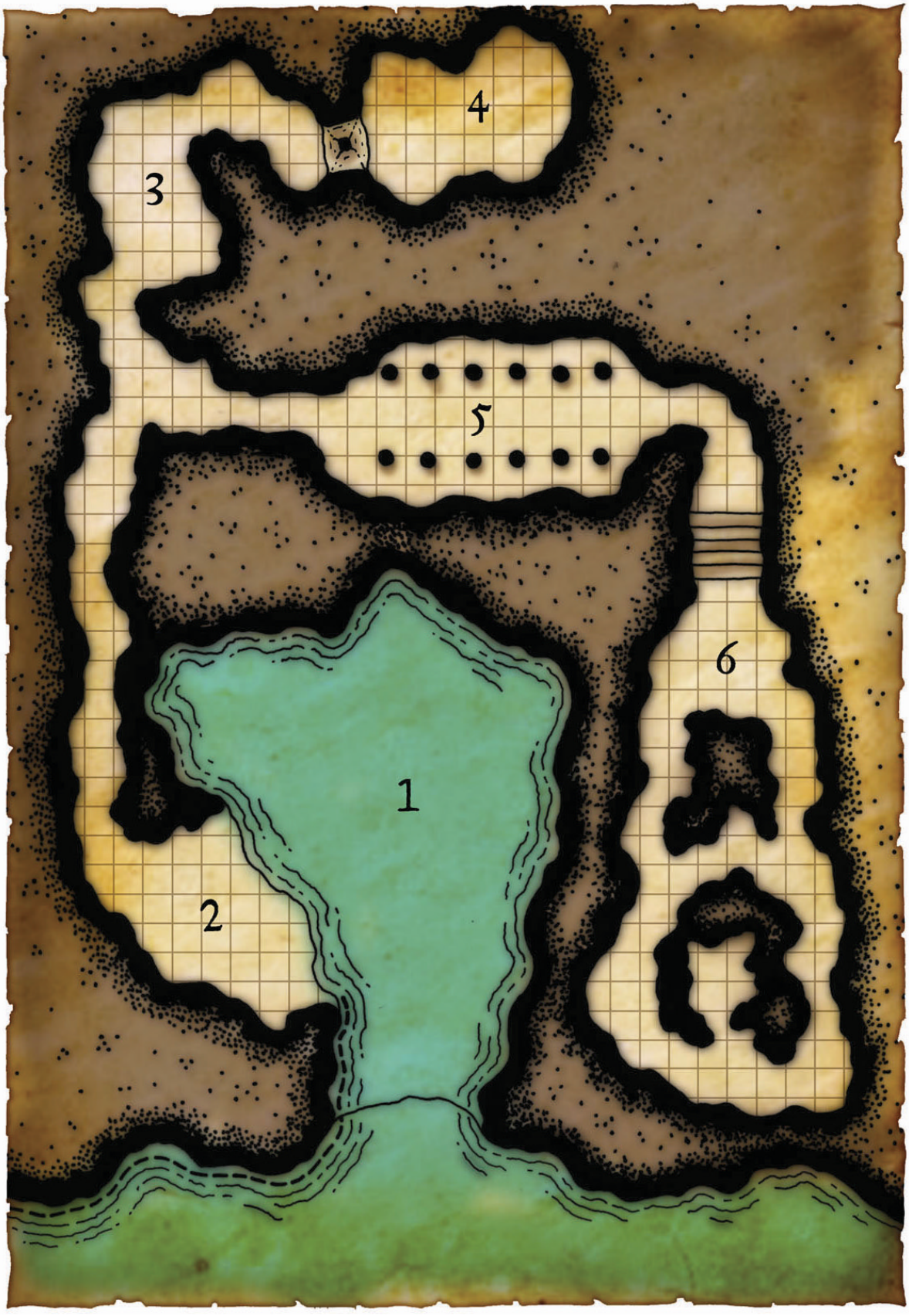
Development: One exit tunnel leads to the second cave (C2), and the other leads to the third cave (C3).

C2. Second Cave

Miraxacalas used this cave to meet with humans and to engage in research. She loved to learn, and would again if she were healed. Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs arrive.

> Numerous pieces of human-sized furniture including sofas, chairs, bookcases, and writing desks give a homey appearance to this cavern, though the furniture is dwarfed by the sheer size of the 50-foot-diameter chamber. Another tunnel on the opposite side from the entrance leads into darkness.

Development: The exit tunnel from this cavern leads to area C3. A brief inspection (Search DC 15) reveals several books on history, foreign cultures, and mathematics lying open on the desks and sofas.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C3. Third Cave (EL 17)

Miraxacalas now makes her home in this cavern. Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs arrive.

> Tapestries drape the walls of this cavern, and decorative statuary adds a welcome touch of culture to the cold stone interior. A few golden glints gleam from a large, raised piece of stone in the center back portion of the cavern.

The raised portion of the floor has been made into dragon-sized bed, and the golden glints are scales that Miraxacalas has lost. A secret door at the back of this cavern opens onto a tunnel that leads to the fourth cave, where she keeps her hoard.

Creature: Miraxacalas has made this chamber her sleeping area during her convalescence. Though it is easier to defend than the first chamber in her lair (area C1), she has had little luck fending off the giants in her weakened condition.

Though she has always been a formidable creature capable of driving off any other creatures that threatened her people, Miraxacalas would rather learn than fight. She is passionate about discovering new knowledge, and she studies every subject in as much depth as she can. To her, knowledge is a far better treasure than gold.

Miraxacalas (diseased): Female mature adult gold dragon; CR 17; Huge dragon (fire); HD 26d12+26; hp 195; Init +4; Spd 60 ft., swim 60 ft., fly 200 ft. (poor); AC 33, touch 8, flat-footed 33; Base Atk +26; Grp +40; Atk +31 melee (2d8+6, bite); Full Atk +31 melee (2d8+6, bite) and +25 melee (2d6+3, 2 claws) and +25 melee (1d8+3, 2 wings) and +25 melee (2d6+9, tail slap); Space/Reach 15 ft./10 ft. (15 ft. with bite); SA breath weapon (50-ft. cone of fire or weakening gas), crush 2d8+9, frightful presence, spell-like abilities, spells; SQ alternate form, blindsight 60 ft., damage reduction 10/magic, darkvision 120 ft., immunities (fire, paralysis, sleep), keen senses, low-light vision, *luck bonus*, spell resistance 25, vulnerability to cold, water breathing; AL LG; SV Fort +16, Ref +15, Will +20; Str 23, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 8, Wis 21, Cha 20.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +21, Diplomacy +33, Gather Information +7, Hide —8, Knowledge (arcana) +22, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +19, Knowledge (geography) +19, Knowledge (history) +22, Knowledge (local) +19, Knowledge (nature) +19, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +19, Knowledge (religion) +19, Knowledge (the planes) +19, Listen +33, Search +25, Spot +33, Swim +14, Use Magic Device +14; Alertness, Blind-Fight, Flyby Attack, Hover, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Snatch, Weapon Focus (bite), Wingover.

Breath Weapon (Su): Once every 1d4 rounds, Miraxacalas can breathe a 50-foot cone of fire gas or weakening gas. Each creature in the area of the fire breath takes 14d10 points of fire damage (Reflex DC 24 half). Each creature in the area of the weakening gas must make a DC 24 Fortitude save or take 7 points of Strength damage.

Crush (Ex): Whenever Miraxacalas flies or jumps, she can land on opponents as a standard action, using her whole body to crush them. Her crush attack affects Small or smaller opponents within a 15-foot-by-15-foot area. Each potentially affected creature must succeed on a DC 24 Reflex save or be pinned, automatically taking 2d8+9 points of bludgeoning damage during the next round unless the dragon moves off. If Miraxacalas chooses to maintain the pin, treat it as a normal grapple attack. Pinned opponents take damage from the crush each round if they don t escape.

Frightful Presence (Ex): Whenever Miraxacalas attacks, charges, or flies overhead, each creature in a 300-foot radius that has 25 or fewer HD must make a DC 28 Will save. Failure indicates that the creature is panicked for 4d6 rounds (if it has 4 or fewer HD) or shaken for 4d6 rounds (if it has 5 or more HD).

Spell-Like Abilities: 3/day *bless*. Caster level 9th.

Spells: Miraxacalas casts spells as a 9th-level sorcerer.

Alternate Form (Su): Miraxacalas can assume any animal or humanoid form of Medium size or smaller as a standard action three times per day. This ability functions as a *polymorph* spell (caster level 9th) cast on herself, except that she does not regain hit points for changing form and can assume only the form of an animal or humanoid.Miraxacalas can remain in her assumed form until she chooses to assume a new one or return to her natural form.

Blindsense (Ex): Miraxacalas can pinpoint creatures within a distance of 60 feet. Opponents she can t actually see still have total concealment against her.

Keen Senses (Ex): Miraxacalas can see four times as well as a human in shadowy illumination and twice as well in normal light. She also has darkvision to a range of 120 feet.

***Luck Bonus* (Sp):** Once per day, Miraxacalas can touch a gem embedded in her hide and enspell it to bring good luck. As long as she carries the gem, she and every good creature in a 70-foot radius receive a +1 luck bonus on all saving throws and similar rolls, as for a *stone*

of good luck. If she gives the enspelled gem to another creature, only that bearer gets the bonus. The effect lasts 1d3 hours plus 21 hours but ends if the gem is destroyed. This ability is the equivalent of a 2nd-level spell.

Water Breathing (Ex): Miraxacalas can breathe underwater indefinitely and can freely use her breath weapon, spells, and other abilities while submerged.

Sorcerer Spells Known (6/8/7/7/5; save DC 15 + spell level): 0 *arcane mark, detect magic, mage hand, mending, message, prestidigitation, read magic, touch of fatigue;* 1st *alarm, charm person, identify, mage armor, ray of enfeeblement;* 2nd *blindness/deafness, detect thoughts, scorching ray, see invisibility;* 3rd *clairaudience/clairvoyance, suggestion, tongues;* 4th *arcane eye, lesser globe of invulnerability.*

Tactics: When the *alarm* spell in area C1 goes off, or when she realizes that intruders are present by some other means, Miraxacalas turns into a bat using her alternate form ability and clings to the ceiling, where she hopes to escape notice. When the PCs enter, she moves between them and the entrance as quietly as she can. She then resumes her own form and charges them breathing fire, believing them to be juvenile giants here to attack her.

Miraxacalas has not had to fight a really dangerous opponent for years now, so she is out of practice. If the PCs engage her in combat, she uses whatever ability or attack comes to her mind first, without the careful planning that a seasoned fighting dragon would use.

Any PC who spends a round not engaged in combat with Miraxacalas is entitled to a DC 20 Spot check to notice her unusual appearance. Her scales have lost much of their golden shimmer, and their edges have taken on a sickly greenish cast. Several gaping claw wounds on her body are oozing a thick, greenish pus, and her wide, staring eyes are lit with a maniacal gleam.

Development: Beneath her advancing madness, Miraxacalas still retains her good and loving nature. However, the wyrm fever has her so crazed that she cannot accept the characters as anything other than enemies at the moment. The PCs can open negotiations with her in only two ways: heal her of her malady or throw down their arms and use their diplomatic skills to convince her that they are friends.

Curing Miraxacalas of wyrm fever requires a *cure disease* spell. Her lost ability score points and hit points can be restored in the usual ways. After she is cured of the disease, the light of madness immediately fades from her eyes, and she sees the PCs for what they are. At that point, she welcomes them to her lair, apologizes for harming them, and listens to their tale.

Any attempt to negotiate with the gold dragon before curing her requires a successful DC 30 Diplomacy check. Success stops her attacks and gains her attention for 1 round; failure means she continues to attack. If the PCs use this time to tell her they mean her no harm, she warily steps back and asks them why they want to kill her. Thereafter, a successful Diplomacy check opposed by her Sense Motive check convinces her that she is safe for the moment, though she still sees the characters as young stone giants and speaks to them accordingly. She answers all questions truthfully and can be convinced with another opposed Diplomacy check that the PCs are not giants and truly wish to help her.

Miraxacalas can explain the entire history of her relationship with the town if asked, and she inquires as to the health and safety of her people. She dwells on the intriguing intellectual discourses she has with sages and wizards, and marvels at how well she and the townspeople get along. From her conversation, it is clear that she values the townspeople for themselves as well as for what they can do for her.

She can also describe the black dragon and relate everything that has happened to her since his arrival. If the PCs cure Miraxacalas of her illness and fully restore her to normal, she agrees to help them fight Vrinthralix if so requested.

C4. Fourth Cave

This cavern is accessible only via a secret door from area C3. The gold dragon has hidden her hoard in this chamber. The giants have already located it and taken her items of healing, but they have thus far left the rest of her hoard alone, per instructions from their employer.

Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs find this chamber.

> This 50-foot-diameter cavern is filled with treasure, heaped in careless piles about the rear portion. Gold coins spill onto the floor from dozens of chests and sacks, and gems and jewelry decorate the walls and adorn several statues standing in the front section. Books of all sorts are shelved neatly on the bookshelves lining the rear wall. Tapestries depicting a gold dragon in flight or battle hang from the ceiling.

Miraxacalas tends to trade wands, staves, magic weapons, and wondrous items with the nearby wizards for books of knowledge or power, so she has very few magic items other than tomes.

Treasure: Miraxacalas s hoard consists of 3 tapestries featuring herself (200 gp each), 8 peridots (380 gp

each), 3 diamonds (1,300 gp each), 12 blue topazes (25 gp each), 2 statues (480 gp each), 150,000 gp, *cloak of resistance +3, Boccob's blessed book, horn of goodness, ring of the ram.*

D. THE MARSHES

The marshes near Silversands are extremely dangerous, so the residents avoid them for the most part. A few townsfolk know the area around the periphery, but no one has actually ventured inside. Thus, no one knows the nature or location of the abandoned complex that Vrinthralix is currently using as a lair.

D1. RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

The presence of a powerful dragon has caused most of the weaker monsters in the marshes to seek other homes. The following creatures still roam the area, however, and can serve as random encounters for the PDs.

- A green hag with 10 sorcerer levels and a focus on summoning. She can be accompanied by any other creatures that she can summon, plus up to four 8th-level troll barbarians.

Green Hag Sorcerer: Female green hag sorcerer 10; CR 15; Medium monstrous humanoid; HD 9d8+9 plus 10d4+10; hp 84; Init +5; Spd 30 ft., swim 30 ft.; AC 24, touch 11, flat-footed 23; Base Atk +14; Grp +18; Atk +18 melee (1d4+4, claw); Full Atk +18 melee (1d4+4, 2 claws) or +20/+15/+10 melee (1d4+6/19–20, +2 *dagger*) or +15 ranged (1d8/19–20, light crossbow); SA mimicry, spell-like abilities, weakness; SQ darkvision 90 ft., spell resistance 18; AL N; SV Fort +10, Ref +13, Will +15; Str 19, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 16.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +17, Hide +9, Knowledge (arcana) +11, Knowledge (nature) +7, Listen +11, Spellcraft +13, Spot +11, Swim +12; Alertness, Blind-Fight, Combat Casting, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Spell Focus (conjuration).

Mimicry (Ex): The green hag sorcerer can imitate the sounds of almost any animal found near her lair.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will—*dancing lights, disguise self, ghost sound* (DC 13), *invisibility, pass without trace, tongues, water breathing.* Caster level 9th.

Weakness (Su): A green hag can weaken a foe by making a special touch attack. The opponent must succeed on a DC 17 Fortitude save or take 2d4 points of Strength damage.

Sorcerer Spells Known (6/7/7/7/5/3; save DC 13 + spell level of 14 + spell level for conjuration spells): 0—*arcane mark, ghost sound, mage hand, mending, message, open/close, prestidigitation, read magic, touch of fatigue;* 1st—*burning hands, expeditious retreat, hold portal, summon monster I, ventriloquism;* 2nd—*blindness/deafness, knock, see invisibility, summon monster II;* 3rd—*haste, summon monster III, tongues;* 4th—*confusion, summon monster IV;* 5th—*passwall.*

Possessions: +2 *dagger,* light crossbow, 10 bolts, *bracers of armor +2, cloak of resistance +1, potion of cure serious wounds,* 50 gp.

- Three or four werewolf lords (see the *Monster Manual*).
- Four mudmaws (see *Monster Manual II*), each advanced to 24 HD.

Advanced Mudmaws (4): CR 9; Huge magical beast; HD 24d10+120; hp 252; Init +5; Spd 20 ft., swim 30 ft.; AC 20, touch 9, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +24; Grp +40; Atk +31 melee (1d6+8, tentacle rake); Full Atk +31 melee (1d6+8, 2 tentacle rakes) and +25 melee (1d8+4, bite); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA constrict 3d8+12, improved grab, spell-like abilities, trample 3d6+12; SQ damage reduction 10/magic, darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent, spell resistance 18; AL N; SV Fort +19, Ref +15, Will +11; Str 27, Dex 12, Con 21, Int 3, Wis 12, Cha 16.

Skills and Feats: Hide +13, Survival +8, Swim +16; Blind-Fight, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Power Attack, Track, Weapon Focus (tentacle rake).

Constrict (Ex): On a successful grapple check, an advanced mudmaw deals 3d8+12 points of damage.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, an advanced mudmaw must hit an opponent of any size with a tentacle rake attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict in the same round.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will—*slow* (DC 16), *soften earth and stone, water walk.* Caster level 5th.

Trample (Ex): As a standard action during its turn each round, an advanced mudmaw can literally run over a Large or smaller opponent. The trample deals 3d6+12 points of bludgeoning damage. A trampled opponent can attempt either an attack of opportunity at a -4 penalty or a DC 30 Reflex save for half damage.

E. VRINTHRALIX'S LAIR

As noted earlier, nobody in the Silversands area knows exactly where Vrinthralix's lair actually lies, though the townsfolk can supply the PCs with a few ideas about where to look for it. A *legend lore* spell provides a good indication of its location, but the casting time is 1d10 days because the dragon is not "at hand." During that time, Vrinthralix raids Silversands twice unless challenged.

Clairaudience/clairvoyance, even cast at 18th level, lacks the range to reach into the lair from outside the marshes where it lies. However, the characters can still use this spell to peek inside potential locations for the lair without actually entering them. If they take that route, however, Vrinthralix is likely to find them first. When he isn t harassing the town, Vrinthralix spends his time patrolling the marshes, attacking just about any creature he sees.

A *scrying* or *greater scrying* spell offers the most efficient way to locate Vrinthralix, but given the dragon s formidable Will save bonus, the PCs probably will have to try several times before getting a look at him. To make matters worse, Vrinthralix probably gets a bonus on his Will saves against the party s *scrying* spells (see the spell description in the *Player's Handbook*). Even if they do manage to scry the dragon, he s just as likely to be somewhere outside his lair as he is to be in it.

FIGHTING VRINTHRALIX (EL 20)

Vrinthralix can be encountered either inside or outside his lair. He spends most of his time patrolling the nearby swamp, and he spots the PCs approaching unless they have taken special care to avoid detection.

Vrinthralix avoids fighting in his lair if at all possible. He has no interest in sacrificing himself to protect the small amount of treasure he keeps here, and he knows that the close confines of this lair put him at a disadvantage in combat. Besides, he can always recover any stolen items from the invaders corpses (or so he thinks). Should the PCs manage to loot the lair and escape without facing Vrinthralix (using *teleport* or *planar travel*, for example), the outraged dragon redoubles his assault on Silversands, hoping to draw the characters back.

If the PCs manage to corner Vrinthralix inside his lair, he tries to draw them outside, where he can fight them more effectively. He might, for example, use his Snatch feat to grab a character and then carry him or her outside, hoping the rest of the party will follow. If necessary, Vrinthralix uses *teleport* (cast defensively) to move himself to a point high in the sky, a couple miles north of the lair. He then prepares for battle (see preparatory notes in Tactics, below), positioning himself to hit the PCs with spells and his breath weapon as soon as they emerge from the lair, then retreating under *greater invisibility* until he can launch a new attack.

If the PCs talked Miraxacalas into fighting alongside them, she focuses primarily on spells that aid the PCs and on using her breath weapon. Vrinthralix concentrates his initial attacks on the gold dragon, hoping to scare her off or seriously wound her in battle.

Creature: Cruel to the tips of his claws, Vrinthralix never hesitates or delays once he has made a decision. He is crafty and powerful, and he has faced down scores of adventurers before now. He never simply slugs it out with any creature; instead he tries to make the best possible use of his breath weapon and spells before resorting to his physical abilities. If he can defeat his enemies through the use of guile, psychology, and fear, he is even more pleased.

Vrinthralix: Male wyrm black dragon; CR 20; Gargantuan dragon (water); HD 34d12+238; hp 459; Init +4; Spd 60 ft., swim 60 ft., fly 200 ft. (clumsy); Base Atk +34; Grp +58; AC 44, touch 11, flat-footed 44; Atk +42 melee (4d6+12, bite); Full Atk +42 melee (4d6+12, bite) and +40 melee (2d8+6, 2 claws) and +40 melee (2d6+6, 2 wings) and +40 melee (2d8+18, tail slap); Space/Reach 20 ft./15 ft. (20 ft. with bite); SA breath weapon (120-ft. line of acid), crush 4d6+18, frightful presence, spell-like abilities, spells, tail sweep 2d6+18; SQ blindsight 60 ft., *corrupt water*, damage reduction 20/magic, darkvision 120 ft., immunities (acid, paralysis, sleep), keen senses, low-light vision, spell resistance 26, water breathing; AL NE; SV Fort +26, Ref +19, Will +23; Str 35, Dex 10, Con 25, Int 18, Wis 19, Cha 18.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +37, Diplomacy +8, Gather Information +6, Hide —12, Intimidate +41, Knowledge (arcana) +22, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +22, Knowledge (geography) +22, Knowledge (history) +16, Knowledge (local) +20, Knowledge (nature) +24, Listen +43, Search +41, Sense Motive +29, Spellcraft +6, Spot +43, Survival +20, Swim +35, Use Magic Device +24; Alertness, Blind-Fight, Cleave, Empower Spell, Flyby Attack, Hover, Improved Initiative, Multiattack, Power Attack, Snatch, Track, Wingover.

Breath Weapon (Su): Once every 1d4 rounds, Vrinthralix can breathe a 120-foot line of acid. Each creature in the area takes 22d4 points of fire damage (Reflex DC 34 half).

Crush (Ex): Whenever Vrinthralix flies or jumps, he can land on opponents as a standard action, using his whole body to crush them. His crush attack affects Large or smaller opponents within a 20-foot-by-20-foot area. Each potentially affected creature must succeed on a DC 34 Reflex save or be pinned, automatically taking 4d6+18 points of bludgeoning damage during the next round unless the dragon moves off. If Vrinthralix chooses to maintain the pin, treat it as a normal grapple attack. Pinned opponents take damage from the crush each round if they don t escape.

Frightful Presence (Ex): Whenever Vrinthralix attacks, charges, or flies overhead, each

creature in a 330-foot radius that has 33 or fewer HD must make a DC 31 Will save. Failure indicates that the creature is panicked for 4d6 rounds (if it has 4 or fewer HD) or shaken for 4d6 rounds (if it has 5 or more HD).

Spell-Like Abilities: 3/day *darkness* (110-ft. radius), *insect plague*; 1/day *plant growth*. Caster level 13th.

Spells: Vrinthralix casts spells as a 13th-level sorcerer.

Tail Sweep (Ex): Vrinthralix can sweep with his tail as a standard action. The sweep affects Medium or smaller creatures in a half-circle with a radius of 30 feet extending from an intersection on the edge of the dragon s space in any direction. Each potentially affected creature in the area takes 2d6+18 points of damage (Reflex DC 34 half).

Blindsense (Ex): Vrinthralix can pinpoint creatures within a distance of 60 feet. Opponents he can t actually see still have total concealment against him.

***Corrupt Water* (Sp):** Once per day, Vrinthralix can stagnate 10 cubic feet of water within 330 feet, making it still, foul, and unable to support animal life. The ability spoils liquids containing water. A magic item (such as a potion) or an item in a creature s possession must succeed on a DC 31 Will save or become fouled. This ability is the equivalent of a 1st-level spell.

Keen Senses (Ex): Vrinthralix can see four times as well as a human in shadowy illumination and twice as well in normal light. He also has darkvision to a range of 120 feet.

Water Breathing (Ex): Vrinthralix can breathe underwater indefinitely and can freely use his breath weapon, spells, and other abilities while submerged.

Sorcerer Spells Known (6/7/7/7/7/6/4; save DC 14 + spell level): 0 *arcane mark, dancing lights, detect magic, detect poison, ghost sound, mage hand, mending, prestidigitation, read magic*; 1st *comprehend languages, mage armor, magic missile, shield, true strike*; 2nd *bear's endurance, cat's grace, detect thoughts, mirror image, resist energy*; 3rd *dispel magic, displacement, fireball, vampiric touch*; 4th *detect scrying, greater invisibility, polymorph, stoneskin*; 5th *cone of cold, magic jar, teleport*; 6th *true seeing, wall of iron*.

Possessions: *ring of protection +5*.

Tactics: In a fight, the black wyrm prefers open spaces where he can remain out of reach of his opponents and soften them up before physically engaging them. Given the chance to cast spells on himself before combat (or even during combat, when he is high above his foes), Vrinthralix casts *true seeing, stoneskin, shield, mage armor, displacement,* and *cat's grace*. He either saves *resist energy* until he knows what kind of energy to resist, or casts it for fire, cold, and lightning in advance.

Vrinthralix often begins a battle under the effect of *greater invisibility*. This tactic is especially effective if he is flying at least 100 feet above his foes, since they cannot detect him without magic. During combat, he empowers *fireball, magic missile*, and *vampiric touch*. Empowering a spell takes a full-round action, however, so he can only do so while on the ground, since he must use a move action each round to stay aloft. One tactic he employs often is to swoop down and snatch a target with a held empowered *vampiric touch*, so that he deals both bite damage and spell damage. He also employs *mirror image* to advantage in combat.

When in melee with his opponents, Vrinthralix employs *true strike* so that he can use Power Attack for 30 or more points. He uses his crush attack and other melee abilities in full attack mode only after his other attacks have softened up the foes. One of his favorite tactics is to grab a solitary opponent, carry it high in the air while biting and clawing, then throw it down from a great height. When he realizes that the PCs are truly formidable opponents, he tries to wear them down and deplete their resources through repeated hit-and-run attacks.

If Vrinthralix gets into trouble, he uses *bear's endurance* to add to his hit points, and *teleport* if he really is in danger of dying. He does not stick around if death seems imminent.

Development: The black dragon is willing to talk to the PCs if encountered outside, though he remains at a safe distance during any negotiations. The likelihood of getting him to talk depends on Diplomacy or Bluff checks, approach, and how much contact (or battle) he has already had with the PCs.

LAYOUT OF THE LAIR

The area where Vrinthralix has made his lair was once a temple to a hidden cult, but it was abandoned long before Silversands was established. The larger cavern areas can accommodate Vrinthralix in his normal form, and he stores wealth in the smaller areas. He can easily move around in human form simply by using *polymorph* spells.

Vrinthralix has spent the last few weeks lining the interior walls of his lair with *wall of iron* spells to prevent entry via *passwall* spells. The iron walls are 3 inches thick in most places, and behind them lies only earth. The only portions of the lair not so protected are the ceilings. The passages within the lair are about 15 feet high. There are no light sources, since Vrinthralix does not need any light.

Entryway

An opening in the side of a hill provides entry to the lair via a cavern that looks to be only about 6 feet high and

20 feet wide. The rest of the passage lies underwater. The entry is partially screened by plant overgrowth, so it is likely to be overlooked by anyone not actively seeking it (Spot DC 25). After all, a dark spot surrounded by marsh plants and small trees is not that remarkable.

E1. Vrinthralix's Sleeping Chamber

Vrinthralix likes sleeping in the water, and this cavern is filled with fetid, murky liquid. He also likes the place because it offers plenty of room to move around. At the bottom of the water are a few of Vrinthralix s scales, plus six 100-gp gems. If Vrinthralix is not here, this cavern is devoid of occupants.

E2. Access to Water

This small cave adjoins Vrinthralix s watery bedchamber. In olden times, the portion next to the water was used as a dock for people entering the complex, but the docks are long gone. All that remains of them is a single post near the shoreline.

The cavern itself was once used as a storehouse for goods that the residents didn t want to carry around with them. Now, it is just an empty cave.

E3. Wide Area in Passage

This area is no more than a widening of the passage. It used to be wider, but a cave-in on the bottom right corner closed off part of it about 80 years ago. This cave is covered in slime and muck. A small crack in the upper corner lets in water, and this chamber area is slightly lower than the corridor, so about an inch of standing water has collected on the floor.

Green slime colonies have taken hold in this chamber, just under the water and along the iron walls. See the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for a description of green slime.

E4. Empty Cavern

This cavern can be accessed only by crossing a pit. The pit was once used for housing, but any traces of the domiciles that once occupied it are long gone. Vrinthralix has left a few gems lying in the far end of the room in hopes that any visitors may waste time looking for secret treasure caves here.

E5. Columned Passageway

This area was the entryway to the cult s main worship area and meeting place. The columns are carved with images of humanoids and various infernal beings.

This area was once trapped to prevent nonmembers from accessing the cult s most private areas. The pressure-plate arrow trap no longer works, but it is still detectable (Search DC 22). The pressure plate covers the entryway, and the nonfunctioning crossbows are located in the first six pillars. Panels slid open when the trap was activated and closed again while it reloaded itself. The bolts currently loaded are coated with wyvern poison.

E6. Treasure Cave

Vrinthralix keeps his hoard in this area, which is really nothing more than a set of passages that connect and dead-end. Most of the treasure is piled in wider spots in the passages, but some is hidden behind rockpiles or *walls of iron*. Vrinthralix did not go to a lot of trouble to trap or hide his treasure, since he doesn t think anyone in Silversands could find his lair in the first place, let alone survive to take anything away.

Treasure: The entire hoard consists of 6 garnets (200 gp each), 8 aquamarines (380 gp each), 5 diamonds (1,300 gp each), 14 blue quartz (25 gp each), 1 blue diamond (6,300 gp), 3 black pearls (480 gp each), *goggles of night, winged shield, potion of protection from arrows 10/magic, bracers of armor +4, potion of water breathing, wand of invisibility* (50 charges), *+1 vicious icy burst greataxe, rod of thunder and lightning, Daern's instant fortress.*

CONTINUING THE ADVENTURE

Depending on how the PCs choose to handle the situation, they could find many additional adventures in the Silversands areas. If both dragons die, the people of Silversands will need good leaders to help them transition to another way of life. If Vrinthralix is dead and Miraxacalas is still ill or mad, then the heroes must seek her out and cure her. Regardless of the outcome, an item in either hoard could also serve as a springboard to future adventures.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Robert Wiese began playing D&D with the blue boxed set (the one after the original three small pamphlets). He has campaigned through three and a half editions of his favorite roleplaying game, and he has tried *Call of Cthulhu* and some other games as well. Throughout it all, he has learned that a great DM makes a great campaign, so he is happy to assist great DMs with little ideas such as this adventure. He led the RPGA Network through the tough times and now works at UNR as a biochemical researcher. Life is very full between studies, work, pets (three dogs, three cats, a fish, a frog, a toad, and two rats) and gaming, but he always puts his wife and his faith first.